



United States Senate

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
Nomination of M. John Berry to be Director, Office of Personnel Management
March 26, 2009
Washington, DC

I am pleased our Committee has the opportunity today to welcome M. John Berry, nominated to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management. Mr. Berry has spent most of his career managing people and programs in the federal government, and he appears to be well qualified to serve in the position to which he has been nominated.

Having come from a family dedicated to public service – with a father and uncle who fought in World War II and a mother who worked for the Census Bureau – Mr. Berry learned from an early age about the dedication, intelligence, and commitment of those who make a career in service.

Mr. Berry has a record of success on federal employee issues from the policy, management, and employee perspectives. He started his federal career as the Legislative Director for Rep. Steny Hoyer, handling major legislative initiatives on the federal workforce. He served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Law Enforcement for the Department of Treasury. Then at the Department of the Interior, Mr. Berry served as the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget. For the past four years, he has been Director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Zoological Park. In these positions, Mr. Berry received hands-on experience managing tens of thousands of employees in a wide range of occupations and circumstances. He has overseen major capital projects and launched several innovative initiatives for training and overseeing the work of employees and managers and to improve work life conditions at the workplace.

Throughout his career, Mr. Berry has worked successfully to improve employee morale and workplace productivity. He helped design the landmark legislation governing the structure of the pay system for federal employees and created an agency university for employee and manager training. And he has always worked to ensure an open line of communication between management and employees.

As head of OPM, Mr. Berry would be responsible not only for the 4,800 employees under his direct supervision. He would set the human capital agenda for the entire federal workforce at a critical time, as we work to restore confidence in government, create the next generation of leaders as senior employees retire, and hire and retain a talented and dedicated workforce. Mr. Berry will also face looming human capital challenges. Many in the federal workforce are aging and nearing retirement. At the same time, many job-seekers complain about the tedious process of finding and applying for federal jobs, as well as the length of time it takes to get through the hiring process.

The federal government has long been a leader in areas such as flextime, maternity and paternity leave and anti-discrimination rules. Despite this, employees often do not take advantage of existing policies, as a 2008 Government Accountability Report pointed out. I am pleased that Mr. Berry has said he would address these issues to help make the federal government an attractive option for job-seekers and to keep it an attractive option for current employees.

Once again, I would like to offer my congratulations to Mr. Berry on his nomination, commend him on his record at the highest levels of government, and thank him for his agreement to take on these new responsibilities and challenges at the Office of Personnel Management.

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